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ABSTRACT

The undergraduate program to train secondary school teachers of English as a foreign language (TEFL) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman is examined. First, the Omani context of language learning is discussed, notably need for English language skills for technological and economic development in a region with limited contact with the West and some resistance to westernization. A study exploring need for and constraints on a new TEFL program is reported. The study consisted of (1) ethnographic analysis of the sociocultural context for such a program, and (2) a survey of student teachers in the program. The ethnographic portion of the study looked at existing patterns of formal language learning and underlying attitudes, informal language learning opportunities, supply and qualifications of English language teachers, national language policy, and design of the SQU program. The survey, of 74 program participants, elicited information about student educational and language background, self-reported English language skills, attitudes toward the English language and culture, perceived role of English in Oman, and design of the SQU program. Results indicate students had high to intermediate English proficiency but desire for further training, were studying English for practical purposes, and were little concerned about westernization. (MSE)

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ED 369 281

Planning a Tefl Education Program: Policies, Perspectives and Promise.

Jane Jackson Fahmy and Linda Bilton

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PLANNING A TEFL EDUCATION PROGRAM: POLICIES, PERSPECTIVES AND PROMISE

Jane Jackson Fahmy and Linda Bilton

Abstract

When establishing a TEFL education program in a developing country, assistance is often sought from outside specialists. Their task is a challenging one. Simply transplanting a model designed for a native English setting is not enough; adjustments need to be made for the particular EFL context. The consultants must become familiar with the local sociocultural situation, educational system, and language policies. This fact-finding should continue after the student teachers arrive if the program is to reflect the concerns, beliefs, and aspirations of the participants.

This paper describes a case study of the undergraduate TEFL education program at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The first part focuses on the Omani context of language learning and the rationale for the development of a TEFL program. The second stage describes the findings of a study which identified the student teachers' level of English, their reasons for studying EFL, their views about EFL language learning in Oman, and their perceptions about the importance of various subjects in their TEFL program.

Preplanning and ongoing information-gathering of this nature are essential to provide TEFL education programs with a high degree of relevance to the local sociocultural context of language learning and teaching.

Introduction

In this century worldwide, English has become an important language of trade and technology. As a result, there is an urgent need to learn English in non-English speaking countries - a need which creates a great demand for well-qualified EFL teachers. In developing countries many Ministries of Education are actively encouraging their own nationals to become language teachers, thereby reducing dependence on expatriates. Rather than send their students for training in Britain, the United States, Australia, or another English-speaking country, some governments have decided to establish TEFL programs locally.

When setting up such programs, help is often sought from experienced TEFL curriculum specialists from Western countries. The task of these consultants is a demanding one. It is not enough to merely implement a model designed for a native English setting; alterations must be made for the particular EFL context (Abuhamdia, 1984; Adams Smith, 1983a; 1984; Dubin and Wong, 1990; Llamzon, 1986; Pratt, 1982).

Before drafting the curriculum for a new TEFL education program, the consultants need to gather information about the sociocultural setting and local language policy (Dubin and Olshtain, 1986; Dubin and Wong, 1990; Richards and Hino, 1983). This fact-finding should continue after the student teachers arrive. Without the input of the participants, the TEFL specialists will not be able to fully understand the sociocultural context of langauge learning and teaching in that particular setting. The students' perspectives must not be overlooked.

This position calls for an ethnographic/ holistic approach to teacher education whereby the TEFL consultants gather both qualitative and quantitative data in order to learn as much as possible about their students (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). This includes their students' reasons for studying English, their attitudes about language learning and teaching and their own perceptions of their needs and expectations within the framework of the local sociocultural context (Anderson, 1985; Dubin and Wong, 1990; Dudley-Evans, 1983; Horowitz, 1985; Noss, 1985; Spolsky, 1989). This process is essential if the TEFL program is to be culturally appropriate for the participants and highly relevant to the local situation (Berns, 1990; Dubin and Wong, 1990; Edelhoff, 1985; Llamzon, 1986; Trim, 1985).

The promotion of English in a country that has had limited contact with the West is a daring venture. While the local administrators may recognize the need for English to foster economic growth and technological advances, they may also be concerned that this policy could lead to cultural contamination and social unrest. By educating their English language teachers on their soil, governments may be attempting to prevent this. However, can the cultural impact of a foreign language be neutralized?

In an ESL setting, it is understood that students will be exposed to the culture of the host community, but what about in an EFL setting? Should TEFL education make reference to the sociocultural norms and values of particular English-speaking countries? Would TEFL student teachers be fearful of becoming Westernized? Would they undergo a dilemma of conflicting cultural allegiances? Should TEFL specialists try to minimize these possible conflicts?

All of these questions must be considered when setting up a TEFL program and yet to date there is almost no literature about the sociocultural dimension of programs of this nature and almost no data-based research has been reported on (Bernhart and Hammadou, 1987: Gebhard, 1988).

With this in mind, an investigation of a new TEFL education program was carried out in the SE corner of the Arabian peninsula. This paper describes a case study of the undergraduate TEFL program that was opened at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in the Sultanate of Oman in 1986. The TEFL courses were designed to prepare students academically and professionally for EFL teaching positions in Omani junior high and secondary schools (Adams Smith, 1983b, 1984; Gravel, 1986).

The first stage of the study explored the sociocultural context of English language learning in Oman. Background information was sought about the Omani educational system and the place of English language teaching in it. The rationale, goals, and syllabus of the TEFL program at Sultan Qaboos University were then looked at within the framework of the national and university language policies.

Data gathering was carried out by means of basic ethnographic techniques. Local and expatriate TEFL experts were interviewed including the former Director of the English Language Teaching Unit of the Omani Ministry of Education, the Omani Director of Educational Research at SQU, the American TEFL curriculum consultant who was responsible for designing the SQU TEFL syllabus, and the TEFL program's current director. Government documents and reports were also reviewed at the libraries of the British Council, the Omani Ministry of Education, and Sultan Qaboos University (Omani Collection).

To enrich the sociolinguistic database and provide a bank of information for present and future TEFL educators at Sultan Qaboos University, the second stage of the study concentrated on the participants in the TEFL program during the third year of its operation.

A standardized proficiency test was administered to the student teachers to supply an objective measure of their English language competence. In addition, by means of a questionnaire, information was solicited from the TEFL student teachers about:

1) their language and cultural background;
2) their reasons for specializing in English;
3) their attitudes towards the English language and culture;

4) their opinions about EFL language learning in Oman;
5) and their perceptions about the importance of including various subjects in the SQU TEFL program.

Would there be any evidence of an identity crisis on the part of the Omani TEFL student teachers? Several EFL educators with teaching experience in the Arabian Gulf have described the cultural conflict that can interfere with the English language development of Arab students (Abuhamdia, 1984; El-Sayed, 1988; Fellman, 1973; Zughoul et al., 1979).

> ..the Arabs find themselves caught in a dilemma, torn between loyalty to Arabic, out of ideological, cultural, and nationalistic values, on the one hand, and the linguistic concomitants of importing and adopting technology from its English-based sources, on the other (Abuhamdia, 1984, p.28).

However, most of their comments are based on subjective views rather than on research. Would a survey of the cultural attitudes of the Omani TEFL student teachers uncover any hostility or suspicion towards the English language and culture? Would there be any proof of linguistic and cultural disorientation on the part of the TEFL student teachers at Sultan Qaboos University?

SQU Study

Part I

Background

a. Formal Language Learning

Formal education did not begin in the Sultanate of Oman until 1970, when Sultan Qaboos came to power. At this time, there were only 900 students in Oman - all boys, studying in three elementary schools with thirty teachers (Adams Smith, 1983a; Ganjvr, 1988; Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 1986). Education spread rapidly to all corners of the Sultanate in the 1970's and 80's and was offered to both boys and girls from grades one to twelve. By 1988, the number of schools had increased dramatically to 588 with 330,457 students and over 8,000 teachers (Al-Lamki, 1989; Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 1989).

In the early stages of Oman's development, English language teaching was guided by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS, 1983). It was decided that, like their neighbors, English would be taught in Oman as the first foreign language in public schools from grades four to twelve. Thus, by the time Omani students graduate from high school, they have had nine years or approximately 1090.5 (Arts Majors) or 994.5 (Science Majors) hours of instruction in EFL. The distribution of hours is as follows: elementary 262.5 hours, junior hi[illegible] 300 hours, and secondary 528 hours (Arts)/ 432 hours (Science)(Al-Lamki, 1989)

As part of its mandate, the ABEGS formulated a common educational policy for the Gulf States. English was considerd necessary for modernization and the instrumental value of the language was emphasized. The ABEGS also published guidelines for the teaching of the English language and culture in schools in the region. Included were the following goals in the affective domain:

The pupil should:

1. develop a positive attitude towards learning English as a target language, to the extent that it does not affect his positive attitude towards Arabic.

2. be aware of additional basic characteristics of English culture, in addition to those of Arabic and Islamic culture.

3. be willing to enjoy listening to English spoken in different modes (songs, dialogues, speeches, etc.) and reading for pleasure, in addition to enjoying listening to Arabic spoken in the same modes and others.

4. find pleasure in discovering new means of reading and listening to English (and Arabic).

5. be willing to learn more names of English places and people, in addition to Arab and Islamic names of places and people.

6. be willing to use English as another means of communication (in addition to Arabic).

7. acquire reasonable understanding of the native speakers of English on condition that it does not create a negative attitude towards the pupil's Arab/Islamic culture.

8. have continuing interest in reading English books and periodicals that deal with various subjects, with special interest in Arabic and Islamic topics.

9. enjoy constantly increasing variety of good English dramatic and other programmes on the radio, television, etc., especially on Arab and Islamic topics.

10. be able to express, in speech or in writing, the beliefs, values, etc. acquired from the English and Arab/Islamic culture (Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, 1983).

These goals convey the desire of the ABEGS to preserve the Arabic language and Islamic culture, while promoting the English language proficiency of the students. They also convey the fear by some that Western culture might have a negative effect on the native language and culture of their schoolchildren.

b. Informal Language Learning

Opportunities for informal language learning in the Sultanate are very limited. Entry to the country is restricted so that most visitors are businessmen, diplomats or members of tour groups who make only brief contact with the local population. Most expatriate workers and their families reside in the capital area, not in the interior where 80% of the students live (Al-Lamki, 1989). As a result, students in Oman have very little opportunity to mix with English people or practice their English language skills. For the vast majority of Omani schoolchildren, the only contact they have with English is in the classroom; therefore, the quality of language instruction that they receive is crucial.

c. English Language Teachers

In 1989 there were 1539 English language teachers in the Omani school system. Of these, only 19.0% were Omanis; the rest of the teaching force were foreigners of various nationalities: Sudanese (28.3%), Sri Lankans (12.7%), Egyptians (11.0%), Jordanians (10.2%), Tunisians (7.4%), Indians (5.1%), Pakistanis (3.7%), British (1.0%) and others (1.8%). Almost all of the teachers spoke English as a foreign language with varying degrees of fluency and had little or no formal training in EFL teaching methodology (Al Barwani, 1983; Al-Lamki, 1989; Bint, 1982). To further exacerbate the situation, some of the expatriates did not speak Arabic and had problems communicating with the Omanis.

Consequently, there has been a high turnover of English language staff who have had difficulty adjusting to the physical, linguistic, and sociocultural conditions in rural or semi-rural Oman.

d. The National Language Policy

The rapid expansion of the Omani school system necessitated the hiring of a great many foreign teachers, but the Sultan and his Governing Council were steadfast in their position that the schools should promote Omani values, culture, and national pride. Moreover, in 1978, the Omani Education and Training Council was set up to ensure the "Omanization" of the educational system. One of the objectives was the replacement of non-Omani English language teachers by nationals (Al Barwani, 1983; Birks and Sinclair, 1987; Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Education, 1988).

In keeping with the national policy of "Omanization", six teacher training centers were opened in the Sultanate. By completing a two year program, Omanis could become qualified to teach in Omani elementary schools (Sultanate of Oman Development Council, 1988).

1986 marked the opening of the first degree-granting institution in the country, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). This technical institution was set up with English as the medium of instruction in the Colleges of Medicine, Engineering, Science, and Agriculture since English was thought to be "the most practical language to enable the university to keep abreast of world developments in scientific fields" (Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Information, 1986, p. 77). In addition, a TEFL program was established in the College of Education and Islamic Sciences to meet the growing demand for qualified English language teachers to staff Omani junior high and secondary schools.

The SQU language policy for the university was set down by the SQU Governing Council and falls in line with the national policy. Al-Manthri, the current Vice-Chancellor of the university and Minister of Education for the country.

> ...the inculcation of Islamic values, intellectual discipline and character building will be emphasized, along with the acquisition of academic and professional qualifications. While moving into a modern age, Oman does not wish to lose its special identity, based on long-standing traditions and the Islamic way of life. Young Omanis suddenly faced with the challenges of a modern complicated world must be equipped to cope with the demands of

> a changing society and the impact of the outside world without detriment to their heritage and the values of their Islamic society (SQU Administration, 1984, p.11).

Thus, English is viewed as a means of conveying scientific and technological information to help the country modernize. The transmission of aspects of Western culture that would conflict with Islamic values is to be avoided. While this policy might seem feasible for the ESP-oriented colleges in the scientific domain, what would be the approach of the TEFL program? Would a conflict occur between the national and SQU language policies and the goals of the TEFL program?

e. The SQU TEFL Education Program

Prior to the opening of the university, an American TEFL specialist with extensive teaching experience in the Middle East was recruited to outline the curriculum for the SQU TEFL program. After assessing the sociocultural and educational background of the Omani secondary students and the needs of the school system, the specialist outlined the objectives of the program. At the end of the four year program in TEFL, the prospective English language teacher should:

- demonstrate a thorough proficiency in spoken and written English.

- have familiarity and understanding of the culture and literature of the English-speaking world.

- understand the nature of the English language, its origins, structure, function and varieties.

- be able to apply theoretical knowledge acquired in the program to classroom situations, using a variety of teaching-learning materials.

- be sensitive to the special language problems of Arab learners of English.

- have a sound background in educational theory and developmental psychology.

- be able to analyze and evaluate instructional materials and textbooks used in the Omani school system and abroad.

- be knowledgeable in basic TEFL and applied linguistics terminology. (Gravel, 1986, p.4).

Acceptance into the TEFL program was to be based on the student's secondary test results, a diagnostic test in English, an interview, and personal interest and motivation to specialize in TEFL (Gravel, 1986).

To improve their level of English, TEFL freshmen would receive 15 hrs. a week of training with the English Language Center. In order to obtain their B.Ed. degree, the students would take courses in linguistics, English literature, EFL methodology, and research skills from TEFL specialists. To fulfill university requirements, they would also take the following courses in Arabic from professors in the College of Education: Omani and Islamic Civilization, Arabic, Educational Psychology, Foundations of Curriculum and Education, and the Educational System in Oman and the Gulf (Gravel, 1986).

When the program started in 1986, the American who designed the TEFL syllabus acted as Director and was joined by two Western-educated Omani lecturers. As the program entered its third year, there was a new Canadian Director, four American professors and two Omani lecturers. All of the expatriates had previous experience in the Middle East but had not taught in Oman before.

Part II of this paper focuses on an investigation of the TEFL students' views about their program of studies and EFL learning and teaching in Oman.

Part II

A Case Study of the SQU TEFL Education Program

Because of the sensitive nature of the information to be solicited from the TEFL student teachers, it was important to secure the support of the TEFL and college administrators. A research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Research Committee of the College of Education and Islamic Sciences (CEIS) which included the Omani Director of Educational Research at SQU, the Dean of CEIS, and the Director of the TEFL program. The Arabic translation of the questionnaire to be used in the study was reviewed by the Arab professors on the committee to ensure that the content would be culturally appropriate and

comprehensible to the Omani students. The purpose of the survey and the procedure were then explained to the staff of the TEFL program who agreed to participate and administer the proficiency test and questionnaire to the TEFL students.

Method

Subjects. Seventy-four students in the TEFL program at SQU took part in this study including first, second, and third year students.

Materials. The Comprehensive English Language Test (CELT), an intermediate-level test developed by Harris and Palmer (1986), was used to measure the proficiency of the TEFL students. The listening section (40 mins.) measured their ability to comprehend short statements, questions, and dialogues as spoken by native-speakers of English, while the structure (50 mins.) section measured their ability to use grammatical forms.

By means of a questionnaire, background information was solicited about the students' sex, language(s) spoken at home, home region, years of EFL study, and amount of time spent in an English-speaking country. Subjects were also asked to rate themselves and their parents on five-point scales for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.

A modified version of the language and cultural attitude questionnaires used by Gardner (1985), Oller and his associates (1977, 1978, 1982; Asakawa and Oller, 1977; Chihara and Oller, 1978) and Pierson et al. (1980) was translated into Arabic. All of the direct questions required a response on a five-point scale rating the importance of reasons for them to learn English.

The researchers were interested in finding out whether the TEFL student teachers were instrumentally, integratively, or otherwise oriented towards the target language and culture. Traditionally, an integrative orientation is defined as reflecting an interest in learning another language because of "a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group" (Lambert, 1974, p. 98), while an instrumental orientation emphasizes "the practical value and advantages of learning a new language" (Lambert, 1974, p. 98). However, as Clement and Kruidenier (1983) have pointed out, there are numerous orientations depending on the linguistic and cultural situation; the interpretations of integrative and instrumental orientations may vary in different contexts. What then, would be the orientations of the TEFL student teachers in Oman?

In the questionnaire, students were also asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with certain statements about the study and use of English in Oman (partly adapted from Pierson et al. 1980 for the Omani context).

Finally, using a five-point scale, the TEFL student teachers were asked to rate the importance of including various subjects in the TEFL program.

Procedure. The subjects were administered the CELT during regular class periods with intact groups. The students were also given the attitude questionnaire to complete. In Arabic they were asked to give honest answers to all questions so that valuable data could be gathered to help provide better programs at SQU. Students were not required to give their names and their anonymity was assured.

Results

Subjects. There were 48 female and 26 male TEFL student teachers who participated in the study for a total of 74. Included were 23 freshmen, 22 second year, and 29 third year students. Of these, 52 indicated that they spoke only Arabic at home, 14 spoke Arabic in combination with Lawati (4), Belushi (3), Swahili (3), English (3), or Farsi (1), and 8 spoke Arabic, English, and one other language - Lawati (3), Belushi (3) or Swahili (2).

Formal Language Learning

All of the students began studying English as a foreign language in grade four and the majority were taught exclusively by nonnative speakers of English; in fact, only 12 had had native English teachers in secondary school. Almost all of the students (72) of the students had never studied English outside of the Omani Educational system; 1 had studied in Britain and 1 had studied English at a college in Bahrain. Thus, most of these Omani students were being exposed to Western English language professors for the first time in their educational careers.

Informal Language Learning

Most of the students (58) had never visited an English-speaking country. 11 had visited for less than six months, 4 for six months to a year, and only 1 had spent more than a year in an English environment. More than half of the students (46) were from the interior (semi-rural or rural parts of Oman), far from the areas where English-speaking expatriates reside; 24 were from Muscat, the capital, and 4

were from another Arabian Gulf country. Thus, the students' exposure to the culture of English-speaking countries and their opportunities to interact with native English speakers for the most part has been very limited.

EFL Proficiency

Table 1 gives the means and standard deviations of the various measures of EFL proficiency and related variables. To provide a measure of the students' overall proficiency in English, the scores on the listening and structure sections of the CELT were averaged together. The mean score for listening was 69.05 with a standard deviation of 11.95, while the structure section had a mean score of 63.85 and a standard deviation of 10.59. The average of the combined CELT sections resulted in a mean score of 66.45 (S=11.27) in the intermediate to high-intermediate range. Their scores were much higher than those of their university colleagues who had opted to major in science, agriculture, medicine and engineering. These students were also administered the CELT and scored 34.80 (S=14.96) on the combined CELT sections (Jackson Fahmy and Bilton, 1990).

Using a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "like a native speaker", on average the students rated their understanding the highest at 3.41 with a standard deviation of .57, followed by reading at 3.32 (S=.72), writing at 3.23 (S= .66) and speaking 2.95 (S=.48).

Using the same five-point scale, the students rated their mother's English at an average of 1.26 (S=.73) and their father's at 1.96 (S=1.31). Thus, the majority of parents knew little or no English so it is not surprising that only 11 of the students had indicated that they spoke some English at home.

Reasons for Learning English

Means and standard deviations for each of the direct attitude questions relating to reasons for the student teachers to learn English are given in Table 2. The ones judged most important were "to be a well-educated person" and "to take further training in an English-medium institution abroad". Both would appear to represent pragmatic or instrumental motives and sense of professionalism. The least important integrative reasons were "to make friends among English-speaking people" and "have English-speaking friends". This is not surprising since the students' have very limited opportunities to meet English people.

In this small scale study, students were not limited to a pre-determined list of reasons and were given the opportunity to express their views in Arabic. Slightly more than half of the students (42) took the opportunity to make the following statements about why they consider it important to learn English:

- English is an important international language (7)

- to serve Oman (5)

- like to learn foreign languages (5)

- to have another language (4)

- to feel proud of becoming bilingual (4)

- to replace the foreign workers in Oman (4)

- to try to improve the English curriculum in Omani schools (3)

- to be able to translate Arabic (esp. Islamic) books into English (3)

- to know the impressions of English people about Arabs and Islam (3)

- to be able to defend Islam against the criticisms of English people (2)

- to convert English people to Islam (2)

Another look at the reason rated 3.09 on the prepared list, "to better understand English people and their way of life", could indicate a positive integrative orientation towards English people, but note that in Arabic several students explained that it was important to know as much as possible about foreigners who were not Muslims in order to be able to defend Islam. In this case they would not be expressing a wish to integrate with English-speaking people and the orientation would be void of the affective connotation traditionally associated with the integrative motive.

The Use and Study of English in Oman

The student teachers' views about the use and study of English in Oman are also presented in Table 2. The phrases that drew the most positive reaction were "I like the sound of English" and "the use of English has helped Oman to develop." Students disagreed strongly with the statements, "I should not have to learn English" and "when using English I do not feel like an Omani anymore". Most indicated that they were not upset when hearing Omanis speaking English to each other. The student teachers appear to be very confident of their identity as Omanis and do not seem to feel threatened by learning English; for them, it is a necessity to help their country advance.

Attitudes towards the SQU TEFL Program

The TEFL student teachers were also asked to express their views about the importance of including various subjects in the TEFL program. As Table 3 indicates the students considered it extremely important to upgrade their English language proficiency, particularly their grammar and oral skills, and gain practical teaching experience in the school system. It is interesting to note that the study of the culture of English-speaking countries was rated least important.

Discussion

Most TEFL students were found to have an intermediate to high intermediate EFL proficiency. Self-ratings of their language skills further showed that most were unsure of their ability to communicate orally in English. This is important since their language proficiency and level of confidence will influence the extent to which they use English in the classroom and whether they will provide a good model for learners.

The Omani student teachers were aware that they needed to improve their English language skills and, on a very positive note, most expressed a desire for more language training. This language support should be included in the program for as long as it is considered necessary by the participants.

> "language improvement can have a dual function: firstly, and obviously, by raising teachers' proficiency level (with everything else that this entails); secondly, and more subtly, by providing models of teaching behavior and thereby effecting, where desired,

> a change in teaching practices. The tentative conclusion is that language improvement, if integrated with a methodology component, can have a central role in in-service teacher training"
>
> (Berry, 1990, p.97).

Berry's (1990) recommendations are equally applicable to pre-service TEFL education. Language improvement should bolster the confidence of the student teachers, encourage them to use English in the classroom, and allow them to be more at ease with a wider selection of methodology.

The SQU survey showed that most TEFL student teachers seemed to be studying English primarily to achieve pragmatic goals. The language is regarded as important for their academic studies, future employment, and the modernization process in Oman, but has a very limited impact on their personal lives. In fact, the students have expressed only a mild interest in acquiring a better understanding of the target culture; this is likely due to their lack of immediate access to native English-speakers.

The TEFL student teachers exhibited a very positive orientation towards the use and study of English in Oman and did not seem to be worried about becoming Westernized. This is in direct contrast with the observations of Abuhamdia (1984) and El-Sayed (1988) about other Arab learners of EFL.

> ".. the hostility and suspicion one notices in the Arab students' attitudes towards western languages and cultures is natural, since it stems from the fact that the west (Britain, France, and Italy) colonized the Arab World. Since English is a western language, it is viewed by Arab students as a product of imperialism. Yet it is a language they have to learn (whether they like it or not).... They feel that they are compelled to acquire English and they resign themselves to a status of subordination as a result of the cultural and ideological dominance of the native speakers of English in Britain and America. Our students move through the stressful episodes of western acculturation and, as a result, it becomes difficult, according to Lambert, for truly successful EFL learning situations to occur in Arab classes"
>
> (El-Sayed, 1988, p.47-8).

The fact that Oman does not have a history of subordination to an English-speaking country may partly account for the TEFL students apparent lack of hostility toward the English language and culture.

Furthermore, the TEFL students are secure in their identity as Omanis. In harmony with the SQU language and cultural policy, the TEFL student teachers take courses in the Arabic language as well as Omani and Islamic Civilization. As a result, even though they are specializing in a foreign language, the students are not alienated from their cultural heritage. Instead, they are actively encouraged to feel pride in their identity as Omanis and members of the wider Arab community.

While respecting the national language policy and the norms and values of the host country, TEFL educators can help students develop an awareness and appreciation of other cultures without adopting the beliefs associated with it (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984; Bendll et al., 1984; Bentahila and Davies, 1989; George, 1981; Osterlih, 1986; Shalmar, 1982; Trifonovitch, 1988). This approach encourages students to discover more about their own linguistic and cultural background as well as understand the views of others (Acton and Walker, 1986; Alptekin 1987; Smith 1983). This should lead to:

> ".. an identity which is able to transcend the parochial confines of the native and target cultures by understanding and appreciating cultural diversity and pluralism thanks to the new language, while not losing sight of native norms and values in the process. In short, it is a bilingual and intercultural identity"
>
> (Alptekin and Alptekin, 1984, p. 19).

The promotion of an attitude of linguistic tolerance should help avoid the identity crisis or dilemma of conflicting cultural allegiances that Abuhamdia (1984) and El-Sayed (1988) warn can adversely affect students learning EFL in the Arabian Gulf.

The information gathered from a study such as the one undertaken at SQU can help TEFL educators and student teachers become more familiar with the sociocultural dimension of their program. Survey data can help sensitize TEFL professors to their students' level of English, sociolinguistic and educational backgrounds, expectations, concerns, and attitudes towards the learning situation and the prospect of teaching EFL.

In any TEFL program, whether in Oman, Bangkok, or Jakarta, fact-finding of this type should be conducted periodically as the program matures to help keep staff in tune with the attitudes, interests, and motivations of their students and the host community. Steps could then be taken to incorporate this information into the syllabus and instructional materials. The end result will be more promising TEFL education programs that are culturally and linguistically relevant for the participants in their home environment.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations on Various Measures of EFL Proficiency and time spent in an English-speaking country

Measures	M	S
EFL Proficiency		
Listening	69.05	11.95
Structure	63.85	10.59
CELT (avg.)	66.45	11.27
Self Ratings		
*Understanding	3.41	.57
*Speaking	2.95	.48
*Reading	3.32	.72
*Writing	3.23	.66
Parents' English		
*Mother	1.26	.73
*Father	1.96	1.31
**Time in an English-Speaking Country	1.38	.84

*On a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "like a native speaker".

**On a five point scale where 1 = "none", 2 = "less than six months", 3 = "six months to a year", 4 = "one to two years", and 5 = "more than two years".

Table 2

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on Direct Attitude Questions (n=74).

*Reasons for Learning English	M	S
1. to be a well-educated person	4.32	.77
2. to take further TEFL training abroad	3.80	1.20
3. to watch English tv programs, videos or films	3.73	1.10
4. for personal satisfaction	3.71	1.06
5. to get a good job	3.70	1.08
6. to read Eng. texts and journals	3.63	1.23
7. to become an English language teacher	3.46	1.36
8. to read English books for pleasure	3.32	1.08
9. to take English language courses abroad	3.25	1.23
10. to better understand English people and their way of life	3.09	1.42
11. plan to visit an English-speaking country	3.09	1.27
12. to make friends among English-speaking people	3.00	1.19
13. to please my family	2.77	1.16
14. have English-speaking friends	2.27	1.17
** The Use and Study of English		
1. I like the sound of English.	3.83	0.88
2. The use of English has helped Oman to develop.	3.70	1.04
3. The Arabic language is much better than English.	3.11	1.87
4. I feel uncomfortable when hearing Omanis speaking English to each other.	1.82	1.95
5. At times I am afraid that by using English I will become like a foreigner.	1.53	0.98
6. When using English, I do not feel that I am an Omani anymore.	1.30	0.63
7. I should not have to learn English.	1.19	0.44

*On a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "most important".
**On a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree".

Table 3

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations on the student teachers' ratings of the importance of various subjects in TEFL education

	M	S
*TEFL Education		
1. English language skills	4.34	.83
2. Practice Teaching	4.15	1.00
3. Phonetics & Phonemics	3.93	1.03
4. Educational Psychology	3.78	1.06
5. Instructional Technology	3.76	.91
6. Contrastive Linguistics	3.70	1.04
7. L2 Methodology	3.48	.93
8. Applied Linguistics	3.46	.95
9. English Literature	3.46	.88
10. First & Second Language Acquisition	3.43	1.06
11. Computer-Assisted Language Learning	3.39	1.05
12. History of English Language	3.28	.96
13. Research Methods	3.22	.86
14. English Culture	3.20	1.03
*Language Skills		
1. Grammar	4.76	.61
2. Speaking	4.63	.78
3. Writing	4.28	.86
4. Reading	4.22	.86
5. Listening	3.98	1.02

* On a five-point scale ranging from 1 = "not at all" to 5 = "very important".